



ROLE OF SONOWAL KACHARI HAIDANG GEET AS FOLK MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Sonowal kachari is a tribe inhabiting in Indian state Assam with rich Folk cultural heritage. *Bahuwa nas, Hogra nas, Haidang Geet, Hunchari Geet, Kulabudi nas, log bihu, Gayan Bayan, Phulkonwar-MoniKonwar geet, Ainam, Lakhimi naam* etc. are some of the unique Folk performing art traditions of this tribe. With the tribal behavior and immense attachment with their land, river, sky and above all the universe, they deliver some performances during their working or in the leisure time which are associated to their life, activities, thinking and the universe. Struggle, pleasure, sorrow, tiredness, hunger, and other experiences of their life are reflected in these performances. The Haidang Geet is the unique type of ritualistic folk song which not only give recreational or ritualistic communication but also describe about the creation of the universe, their deities with their social and ritual life. The present paper has made an attempt to discuss on Sonowal kachari Haidang Geet and its role as Folk media.

KEY WORDS: Sonowal kachari, Folk, Performance, Media, Communication.

INTRODUCTION:

Expression, communication and sharing are impulsive behaviour of every individual. That inner urge of human being develop various oral narratives, craft, art, custom, belief, performing arts and other practices. In this way all communities create and practise their own relevant music, dance or theatre. These cultures have its own traditions, which is inherited from generation to generation. They have an effect on the thinking and living patterns of each individual of the particular community.

Assam is an Indian state with a number of tribes, castes, religions and communities. Sonowal kachari is an indigenous and major Indo-Mongoloid tribes of Assam. They are in fact belong to the same ethnic group as Bodo Kacharis of the state. According to Sir Herbert Risley in ancient time the tract between the river Brahmaputra and the river Kosi was known as Kachar. The people who lived in this tract were known as Kachari or Kasari. J.D. Anderson says the term is nothing but the corruption of Kossari, i.e. those who have relation with Kochas. (Sarma, Dr. N.C. 2006, P.14-15). According to E. A. Gait the term has emanated from a Sanskrit term which means "broadening region". (Gait, E. 1967, P.299).

Among the tribes of Assam Sonowal kachari is one of the largest in number. Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur are the main districts of Assam where the Sonowals generally reside. Some of the Sonowals though small in number settled at the foothills of Arunachal, Nagaland and Karbi Anglong districts. It is said that the Sonowals are descendants of the Kirat tribes. The Kirats afterwards were known as Kacharis. According to Hiteswar Barbarua "A clan of people was engaged for refining gold was known as Sonowal. (Borbarua, H., 2013, P.573). S.L. Barua also mention that "In the prime of Ahom power in the middle of 19th century, about sixteen thousand Sonowals or Gold washers were engaged by the Ahom government in washing for ten tolas of gold annually." (Barua, S.L., 1997)

The Sonowal Kacharis can be differentiated from others with their multicoloured traditions, social system, ritual habits, economic and political life. The Sonowal kacharis are resourceful in their Folklore and Folklife. With the tribal behaviour and immense love for their land, water, sky and above all the universe they deliver some performances during their working or in the leisure time which are related to their life, activities and the universe. Hope, desire, happiness, sorrow, terror, adoration, behavior, social system, Struggle, pleasure, tiredness, hunger of their life is reflected in these performances.

Among the variety of Folk performances *Bahuwa Nach, Baitho Puja, Haidang Geet, Hunchari Geet, Gojai Sabah, Sarag dew Puja, Hogra Nach, Ieseri, log Bihu, kulabudi nach* etc. are unique habits to this tribe. Moreover the common traditional practices of the different tribes of Assam like the *Bihu, Nowai Tuloni Biya, bhakuli Biya, Lakhimi Sabah, Ai Nam, Biya Nam, Gayan Bayan, Ainam, Lakhiminaam* etc. are also seen to perform by the Sonowals. These rituals and folk cultural performance traditions of this caste carry some unique characteristics and all these depict their social, anthropological, and ritual life. Haidang geet is that type of folk songs of Sonowal kacharis that carries various Folk knowledge from generation to generation orally.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The basic objective of this paper is to understand Haidang Geet performance of Sonowal Kachari tribe with its role as media.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

In this research, fieldwork is used to find out information about various aspects of Haidang songs. Two main methods were used - Firstly, observation and participant observation is used to know the existing media communication style of Haidang songs and secondly, interview method is used to know the various hidden aspects behind its performance. Sources for the data are as follows

1. *Primary sources:* Observation, interview and Participant observation.
2. *Secondary sources:* Published material like Books, Journals, Newspapers and Audio-Visuals relating with communication and Folk performing arts of Sonowal kacharis.

Defining Folk media

Social and communication scientists define folk media focusing on their particular communication specialties. Ranganath defines folk media as "Living expressions of the lifestyle and the culture of people evolved through the years" (Ranganath 1980). The ways of living, socialization, community living is rooted in the lifestyle of people. Culture of a social group takes shape through the people's participation in their life and living process. The cultural life is expressed as the folk media. Therefore, folk media communicates to carry cultural messages which also perform the act of recreation. Wang and Dissanayake defines folk media as, "a communication system embedded in the culture which existed much before the arrival of mass media, and which still exists as a vital mode of communication on many parts of the world presenting a certain degree of continuity, despite changes." (Wang et al.1984). Despite changes Folk media trespasses through a society down the ages. The folk media form remains as a social continuation maintaining continuity among a particular community or society. Thus the creation of a folk media form cannot be trace out accurately. The folk media form evolves through transformations with the process of social change. The basic continuity in a folk media establishes the cultural roots of a social unit. Various habits, customs, performances, life-process of a society maintain continuity and handed down from generation to generation. The existing socio-cultural life of a community can be understand through folk media because folk media communicates among the members of a community at any given point of time.

The folk song is practical, natural and spontaneous. With the changing time and situation its structure changes slowly over centuries modifying itself. Folk song of a particular society is a vital part of the people and relevant of that community. As such folk songs are considered as part and parcel of their daily lives. They can carry messages from one end (source, speaker, writer, artist, musician or dancer) to another (receiver, target, listener, reader or viewer). The folk songs are vehicle for common people or rural folk for disseminating their messages. Thus folk song has immense value as communication tools, which can be termed as folk media.

Haidang Geet (song)

According to Sonowal kachari Folk expert Pramod Sonowal Haidang Geet is the oldest folk songs of the tribe. These are performed by the aged folks at the Baitho temple on the third day as a part of Baitho Puja. Haidang songs carries the information, knowledge and ritualistic habits or as a whole the culture of Sonowal Kacharis and hence they become one of the most significant intangible heritage property of the tribe as well as Assamese. (Sonowal, P. 2011)

To form an idea about the origination of these songs, we will have to look back to the time when people were roaming in the jungle. Perceiving the blissful character of the universe, the primitive people were very curious to know the source of the misty of the universe. It takes years and when they acquired some knowledge they started praying to a super power. This praying words are 'Haidang de' means the prayer for the creation of the universe.

"Haio adi yugar Kacharir Haidang de"

"Haio adi yugar Kacharir Haidang de....."

"Haio adi yugar Kacharir Haidang de"

Meaning - Haidang Songs are the prehistoric songs of Sonowal Kacharis.

According to this prelude after this creation of the Universe, the Sky, the Earth and above all the living beings are created. Various characters of living and non-living of the universe are also discussed in this song.

Haidang songs are divided into eleven chapters and in each chapter the explanation of different themes is forwarded. In the first chapter of Haidang song the philosophy and religious behaviour with the creation of various components of the universe structure are described. It initiates with the line 'Namo Namo Narayan'. At the mercy of Lord Shiva the four classes of living beings *Uran, Buran, Gamon and Vraman* were created. Along with Lord Shiva the other thirty three crores of deities are being worshiped in various ways at different time.

haa.....hai oi namo narayan

hai oi namo narayan

hai oi namo narayan

haahai oi prithabi heno srijoise

hai oi prithabi heno srijoise

Meaning- Salute lord Narayan. The earth, the sky, the sea has been created.

Second chapter - In this chapter of Haidang Geet the story of the creation of the life in the earth and creation of the universe is defined symbolically through the narration of the birth of the birds. Total seventeen stanzas are in this chapter.

eyoe kerker heno keroise

eyoe kerker heno keroise

Hai oi kerker heno keroise

Meaning – Movement has started slowly.

In the third chapter a comparative details on the conscious and unconscious, life and lifeless are being stated. It also expresses the deep realization about sufferings in their life of the primitive people and about the magnitude and glory of animal and other universal objects.

Ha.....Hai oi debar danger kon dangar

Hai oi debar danger kon danger

Hai oi debar danger kon danger

Meaning – Hello, who is the greatest among the deities.

Ha....Hai oi debar dangar Khiring raja j

Hai oi debar dangar Khiring raja j

Debar dangar Khiring raja j

Meaning – Among the deities Khiring Raja is the greatest.

In the fourth part of the Haidang it is tried to reveal as to how the people of the primitive stage have developed and formed their society and how imitation from nature taught them to get married and also mentions about the fourteen clan of Sonowal Kachari tribe. The consequence of marriage of the sons formed fourteen clans such as *Madan, Manikial, Hogral, Muktal, Boro Hazoal, saru Hazoal, Achmal, Foremal, Dhekial, Dongral, Dingial, Lathial and Chatial*.

Ye madan heno manikiyal

Madan oi manikiyal heno

Madan heno manikiyal

Ye borhajowal heno haruhajowal

Meaning – No extra meaning. The names of the fourteen clans are mentioned repeatedly and are sung lyrically.

In the Fifth chapter of Haidang Geet it is sung how Khiring Raja (a sonowal

kachari deity resembles with lord Shiva) went to the residence of king Sangkho for performing the marriage and how the two daughters of king *Sankho* named *Lurupi* and *Surupi* delighted at the appearance of *Khiring Raja* and hence agreed to marry.

Yoe hai oi kon kon raja olaise olaise

hai oi kon kon raja olaise

Meaning – who is getting ready to move.

yoe hai oi khiring raja olaise olaise

hai oi Khiring raja olaise olaise

Meaning – Who is getting equipped to move. Khiring raja is ready to move.

In Chapter Six an attractive description is set about the marriage of khiring Raja with the daughters of king Sankhu.

Yoe hai oi pan bhar shudaisung

Hai oi pan bhar shudaisung

Meaning – we hand over bunch of betel & nut.

Yoe hai oi saul bhar shudaisung

Hai oi saul bhar shudaisung

Meaning – We hand over Rice.

In Chapter seven of the song is sung when the chorus group moves around the *Baitho shal* in the Baitho temple. Taking peacock feather in hand the dancer dances and others accompany him playing cymbal and singing the song. Due to some restrictions there broke out a battle in the marriage venue. In this battle the heavenly power took the side of the khiring Raja and thus Khiring Raja came out victorious in this war. The joy and cheer by the folks at the victory of king *Khiring* is also describe in this chapter.

Koth bhangaisung koth bhangaisung hare re re

Koth bhangaisung ye

Meaning- we are breaking the obstruction.

Ron jikaisung ron jakaisung hare re re

Ron jikaisung ye

Meaning – we triumph in the fighting

In this particular time the chorus group of Haidang Geet go out from the Baitho temple. In front of the temple they sing two bihu song with dance.

Jowagoi oi jowagoi kharekoi oi jowagoi

Kharekoi oi jowagoi

Batat nekandiba roi

Meaning – Please go, Go fast. Do not cry on the way.

In the eight chapter about the warm welcome of new brides to their home by the first wife of Khiring Raja is described. During performance of this part of song the chorus group that coming from the *Baitho* temple sing at the gateway of the residence of the priest. It is known from the Haidang song that after welcoming of the bride and bridegroom a big feast is arranged in Bridegroom's home and the peoples rejoice in the occasion.

Tebe oi ami heno palonghi

Tebe oi borgharar borghaini

Tebe oi borghaini olai mat

Meaning – Then we reach. So, hello the senior wife, come out and please welcome all.

Tebe oi dowari dowar mel

Tebe oi kumwari

Tebe oi dowarat ghumusa jori ki ye hei

Meaning – So the gateman, open the door, so dear princess, why the door is bind by rope.

Ye oi lurupi surupi anaisung

Ye oi he lurupi surupi anaisung

Meaning – Both the princes Lurupi and Surupi are imported.

In the ninth chapter it is clearly narrated that the main deity of Sonowal kachari is Khiring raja means Lord Shiva. Through this part of song they worship all their deities. In this part about the prayer by the Sonowal kacharis for removal of diseases and other evils so as to lead of happy life are also mentioned.

Yoe Khiring raja deutak anaisong

Yoe Bayu raja deutak anaisong

Yoe barun raja deutak anaisong

Meaning – we import (pray) deities like Khiring raja, bayu raja, barun raja, nakleng raja, sakleng raja, delou raja, baring raja as well as many others.

In the tenth part of the song the mother goddess of agriculture *Lakhimi* is collected from the river and kept under the post of *Jamu* tree of the main house of the *Baitho Burha* (the main priest of Baitho puja). For the fruitful growth of agriculture, the goddess of prosperity mother goddess *Lakhimi* is worshiped and welcomed keeping the symbol of her under the main post of the Baitho temple.

Yoe luitar himelu anaisong

Yoe dibang himelu anaisong

Yoe dihingar himelu anaisong

Yoe sakalo nadire ake thai

Yoe jamokar khutate diso thai

Meaning – Himelu (a tree - symbol of Laxmi) is collecting from river Luit, Dibang and Dihing. All the rivers flows from the same source so we place all under the Jamu Post.

In the concluding part of the Haidang song Khiring Raja is being prayed to forgive them for every mistaken committed by them while praying for the welfare of the four classes of living beings comprising *Uran*, *Buran*, *Gajan* and *Vraman*.

Yoe dokhak himelu anaisong

Yoe dayak himelu anaisong

Yoe hakalo dayadukh khyma ou deuta

Meaning – We are performing many faults. So please forgive for all of these.

Yoe nogowa gaisong nakara karisong

Yoe ami ajan balek oi deuta

Yoe khang khai garu jen hong oi pasu jen hoi

Meaning – Here we are doing and singing many blunder, we are foolish child, Getting angry for nothing like a stupid.

Role of Haidang Geet as media

The role of Sonowal kachari Haidang geet is not limited but it has a universal appeal due to its content, tune and presentation style. Haidang Geet of Sonowal kachari serve a number of purposes, such as disseminating Sonowal traditional wisdom, commenting on the creation of the universe, spreading myth, as well as teaching, testing, and storing information. They critique folk belief of Sonowal kacharis, serve as reminder devices, and provide medium for thinking on the Sonowal kachari Folk life and cultural habits. It play the role as oral narratives, describing the listeners the story of the marriage of Khiring raja means lord Shiva and keeps them with themes or content. As a ritualistic folk song in the first stanza of this song it is informed that this song is prehistoric song of Sonowal kacharis. The Haidang song introduce the folk to the marriage customs of Sonowal kachari and stuffs essential for it. The Sonowal kachari Haidang Geet relay the information and knowledge of origin of life, their deities, social and ritual customs within the community as well as to the society. For example, Translations of Sonowal kachari Haidang songs show that they are interspersed with references to local modes pray, enjoyment, and domestic labor. They carry moral messages and forward the information regarding the family and clans of the tribe. Through the Haidang Geet we come to know that *ahmal*, *kumral*, *chatial*, *dingial*, *dhekial*, *dangral*, *formal*, *borhajowal*, *madan*, *maniakial*, *muktal*, *lathial*, *saru hajowal*, *hugral* are the fourteen clans of Sonowal kachari tribe. A comparative description of the various natural components and lives of the universe also featured here. Haidang Geet carries the names of their various deities with their respective position. In the last stanza of Haidang Geet the performer prays their respective God to forgive them for the wrong and fouls done by them during the time of performance of the song.

The Haidang are contextual and are fashioned by local culture, the style of presentation establish their cultural and linguistic identity, and impart community feeling and facilitate group communication among the sonowal kachari people.

In this way the role Haidang Geet is significant to understand Sonowal kachari community.

SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

Folk media has its advantages in disseminating the information among the masses, especially the rural masses. Sonowal kachari Haidang Geet is such type of Folk medium which not only can amuse the rural folk but as a whole can touch the heart of the society for its performance style.

The following suggestions & recommendations may be considered for effective utilisation of Haidang Geet as media in informing and educating.

1. The local bodies and government should patronize the artists and encourage this medium.
2. Folk media has been proven very effective in communication. Hence, due encouragement with improvised version of Haidang Geet may be successful for development communication.
3. To know the Sonowal kachari tribe, Haidang Geet and other such types of Folk songs is a suitable medium. So to understand visually these tribes Folk songs may be helpful in academic institutions.
4. It is marked that a great threat has been imposed to this type of Folk media from various other new media. In this prevailing situation, new innovative programs utilizing Sonowal kachari Haidang geet and other such types of Folk songs with new media are to be derived.

CONCLUSION:

It is observed that Haidang Geet of Sonowal kacharis has been an integral part of their Folk life. It preserves some folk knowledge and information of the tribe keeping an attachments with the roots. Haidang Geet in this way carries the indigenous identity and ethnic beauty of Sonowal kacharis. It is also a media of bonding among the Sonowal kachari people.

Through the study, it has been found out that many social changes have taken place among the Sonowal kachari community with the changes of time, but still they practice own traditions and cultures, although they also have accepted the modern tradition. The role Haidang Geet as folk media have shown that despite great advancement in technology in the modern society, Sonowal kachari community have been giving so much importance on their folk media practices without which some social communication is impossible. Most of the community people, even the educated group have a great respect and shows interest in their own Haidang Geet. What is suggested or try to inform through the Folk songs specially through the Haidang Geet by their forefather to the next generation is strictly followed till today. Therefore we can conclude that the role of Haidang Geet as Folk traditional media have wider and emotional acceptance among Sonowal kachari people.

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